



**PRESS RELEASE**  
August 28, 2023

Contact: Victoria Moreno  
Email: [vmoreno@usccr.gov](mailto:vmoreno@usccr.gov)

## **North Carolina Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Releases Report on the Civil Rights and Equity of Legal Financial Obligations**

On August 28, 2023, the North Carolina Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Committee) issued a [report](#) on the Civil Rights and Equity of Legal Financial Obligations (LFOs) in the state. The report was issued after a series of public hearings in 2020 and in 2022 which resulted in a compilation of testimony from directly impacted individuals, judges, legislators, organizations, and other professionals in the field with specific knowledge of and experience with the conditions and challenges surrounding the court system.

Through this investigation, the Committee explored issues regarding how LFOs have increased over the years and how there is an increased reliance on a substantial portion of their revenue being used to defray general government expenses. The Committee also found that LFO debt can have detrimental, long-term impacts on defendants, most of whom are people of color, and they also pose the risk of warrants being issued for non-paid debt. Among other findings, the Committee highlighted the various administrative and statutory requirements that impede judges from being able to apply LFOs in a fair and consistent way.

Based on the Committee's findings, the report also includes a set of actionable recommendations directed to both the Commission and key stakeholders in North Carolina that is intended to improve policies and procedures in the court system. Their recommendations include proposed amendments to state statutes, the appointment of a bi-partisan legislative committee to study the financial impacts of LFOs, increased data-reporting, and more thorough training for practitioners.

Committee Chair Olga Morgan Wright stated, "This report is the result of a long-term collaborative effort by the Committee to analyze the testimony received and identify key findings and recommendations that can truly be impactful in North Carolina. We ask that the appropriate stakeholders consider the recommendations presented here in order to ensure that LFOs do not present such detrimental impacts to those with debt, that judges and other court personnel can carry out their work in a fair and equitable manner, and that our state government assess the use of LFOs and how it supports the efficiency of our court system statewide."

#####

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights matters and issuing an annual federal civil rights enforcement report. The Commission, by Congressional mandate, establishes Advisory Committees in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Territories. Committee members conduct reviews and produce reports and recommendations concerning local civil rights issues, including justice, voting, discrimination, housing, education, and other important themes. For information about the Commission and our Advisory Committees, please visit <http://www.usccr.gov> and follow us on Facebook and LinkedIn.